

needed that balance, payment was refused me." A long pause, then:

"It was after that, some time after that, that I took Joe Askew. He was the administrator of the San Fernando ranch at Lerdo. I kept him sixteen days. His ransom was the amount of that balance due me. And it was paid, señorita—there are certain relations between certain mines and certain ranches—by the very men who had refused me that balance before."

Another period of pondering. Then: "It is true, too, that I have taken to eat for my men—from Americans and Mexicans alike. But not in pure robbery, señorita, but as a need in a bitterly fought and poverty stricken revolution. I have not only not been the enemy of Americans, but I have been their friend, their protector. There are many of your countrymen who have lived here who will tell you that, but they do not write for your press."

"In 1912, when Orozco was on the stampede and the situation looked bad, I ordered all American families from the surroundings to concentrate in Torreón. I put twenty cars at their disposal when cars were like the very breath of our fighting life. I gave them all I could possibly get together of eatables. I gave them mimos to do the work and an escort of my best men. And I sent them through, like this, to the border. In 1915 again I sent out hundreds of families under my protection. And later, again, Truly, señorita, I tell you that I, Villa, alone, have been responsible for the saving of hundreds of American lives and millions of American dollars. Millions of pesos of silver have been carried by me in safety from American mines to the main line of railroads; and yet your people call me 'Villa, the bandit.' This weighs upon me. This injustice weighs. I wish your people instead of judging me through your papers would actually try me before a tribunal. I would ask for nothing better than that, to be judged for my deeds before an open court!"

Again the heavy sigh. Silence. Then the laugh. The Jefe was on his feet.

"No matter, señorita! For I am a man in everything 'disilusionado de la vida' (disillusioned with life). Let us give you some coffee until the time of supper, and then I will present you to Villa the worker, the organizer, the farmer and builder."

THE family came in to be presented.

The present Señora de Villa is a gentle, pretty Mexican woman about thirty. She wore a white percale dress, and her hair was brushed back softly into a small knot at the nape of her neck. Her voice was exceptionally low, almost a whisper.

Then there was Augustin, Villa's oldest son, Augustin is nine. Then Octavio, about seven, and two little girls. Each child came up and bowed very prettily and then ran over to Villa and took his hand and kissed it. He patted them all, but it was clear from the first moment that Augustin, the oldest, holds the biggest part of his father's affection.

"This boy, señorita," said the Jefe, "can ride any horse on the ranch. And shoot!—show your rifle to the señorita, my son."

Augustin produced from behind the piano a huge rifle. It was bigger than he. So big he could hardly handle it alone. He laid it across his father's knees and tugged to take off its case. Then its wrappings. Then the leather breech protector. He held up the long, shiny gun barrel proudly.

"But that isn't a twenty-two!"

"Of course not," scorned Augustin, aged nine. "It is a thirty-thirty."

"We are 'puros hombres' here, señorita," said Villa. And then: "To-morrow, my little son, you can invite the señorita to shoot at the target with you in the orchard, and see who shall win."

The invitation accepted. The gun wrapped and retired to its peaceful post behind the piano. The children sent out to play. And we went across the sun drenched patio to the dining room.

This is another big, plain, square room of white walls and the floors. Its only furniture, a huge table with a bench on either side, and a hat rack. A window cut in one wall, with a shelf below, gave to the kitchen. One had a vista of a stove like a restaurant range, and two or three women servants at work. We were served by an old ranchman named Pepe—coffee with milk and sweet bread and butter.

Villa urged the butter upon us—home made from the cream of the Jerseys—did we not find it to our taste? Then he noticed Don Eduardo's ninety-peso Stetson lying negligently on the floor.

"But what is this, amigo? When I have had a rack built especially for fine hats!" He ordered Pepe to install the Stetson in state.

HE ASKED us about the United States.

What sort of man was Harding? What sort of man was this other one, Hughes? What were their intentions to Mexico? What of the petroleros? This oil question should be settled. That is what he had said to those in power now in the capital. "The oil question must be settled first and with justice, Mexico must keep friends with the United States. We were neighbors. Neighboring ranchers stood together when there was trouble from the outside. And so it was with countries. And there might be trouble for the United States from the outside—who knows? Now she was powerful and all others were flatterers and pretending friendship. But in their hearts there was envy and all were whispering to themselves, 'Caramba, que ricos estan estos' (Gee! how rich those people are)!" Envy is a terrible force. If trouble should come, why, Mexico would fight for her neighbor. Of course. The creation of false feeling between the two countries was all wrong. It was the game of the politicians in both nations. But the pueblos understood. Especially did the American people understand. Here was a *pueblo culto* (a cultured people). A people that could not be imposed upon. That was the strength of the United States—its *pueblo culto*—while 'my poor people'—so ignorant, so helpless, so easily imposed upon!" He sighed his strange, thick sigh and looked out the door into the glorious Mexican sunshine.

We were all still. A sudden sadness, a hopelessness, seemed to permeate everything. The Jefe's personality is so powerful that he

impresses his moods overwhelmingly on all who are near him.

He brought his eyes back to us, fixing us with his stare.

"A democracy was a useless thing unless its people were cultured." Yes, he had come to this conclusion. Worse than useless—dangerous! The only hope for Mexico was to educate the poor people. And for this they could learn much from the United States. He himself had once lived eight months in California. He could not speak English, only a few words, but he knew the American people. He laughed now, and went on.

When he was in San Francisco he had two thousand pesos in his pocket, but he was hungry all day because he did not know how to ask for anything to eat, only a little fruit from a wagon. Finally, at night, hunger armed his courage. He went into a restaurant and sat down. When the waiter came, he gave him \$10 and pointed first to himself and then to the kitchen. The waiter understood, and, taking his hand, led him out into the kitchen, and from one pot to another. "All the food was different from any I had ever known, so I decided by the smell. I said 'esta' and 'esta' until I had picked out enough. Then the waiter took me back to the table and brought me what I had chosen. It was a good meal, too. The nose is much to be trusted."

"Later I went to Los Angeles. One day I tried to speak in English to a gentleman on the street, and he hit me. I did not hit back, because I did not know why we were fighting. Instead, I stepped aside and followed him until he arrived at his home. That evening I sent a friend who could speak English to this house to inquire why I had been hit. The American was so pleased by my attitude he became my friend, and later gave me a concession for cutting wood up in the hills. I lived here with another American family, and, as the señora was not very well, and as is the custom in the United States, the house was without even one servant. I used to get up early—I have always been accustomed to get up early—and make the fire and lay the table and have everything in movimiento before the family came down. They liked me very much, that American family, and were sorry when I felt I had to return to my country. And now, if you are enough refreshed!"

WE GATHERED our hats decorously from the rack, and went out into the white light again, the beautiful white light of late afternoon in Mexico. Villa led the way across the patio to the entrance arch.

On the left the office. A big oak roller top desk. A filing cabinet. "Truly an office," said Villa with pride.

On the right, the room of "los gallos." Row after row of fighting cocks piled in crates, one on top of the other.

"I like fighting cocks," said the Jefe. "I am a man without vices. I do not drink, and I do not gamble, and I smoke but little; but I like 'los gallos.' This is a beautiful bird, *El Charro*. And look at this one, *El Valiente*—Ah! Here is one you will want to see—Weel-son. Come here, Weel-son! He is not much of a bird, this Weel-son, but"—It just occurred to me then that the bedraggled fighting cock he was holding out for my inspection was named in honor of our former President.

"Not much of a bird, you say?" laughed Don Eduardo.

"Oh, he's all right, only"—He stopped.

"Only what, Don Francisco?"

"Nothing. I was just thinking, that is all. Of course, Wilson was not my friend, but—never mind. *Esta bien*."

"Better name one for Harding," was Don Eduardo's tactful suggestion, after a rather uncomfortable pause. The Jefe laughed.

"Arding! Good! I'll pick out a fighter."

The señora drew me aside. "What does that mean, 'Arding'?" she asked. "And why do they laugh?"

We left the gallos—Weel-son, 'Arding' et al.—and went out into the front, past the church, to a building in course of construction. Workmen were very busy here.

"This is the school, señorita. Soon it will be done. Now the children go every day to an ordinary little house, and a young lady hears their lessons. But in a few months all will be installed here. We will have desks, books, teachers—all that is necessary. The building is according to my ideas." There were long, narrow rooms built around the four sides of a court. We went into the first one.

"This is for the beginners. You see, the windows are high. That is my special idea, so that no child can look out and be diverted from his studies. Here all must be serious. Here children must learn. When a youngster enters this school all he needs is inside these walls. The key can be turned, and nobody can get out except to eat. Children should go to school. I shall see to that." Again the sigh.

"I myself have never had one day in school. Not one day. I am very ignorant. I can read a little, and write a little, that is all. And I learned after I was a man. However," now the laugh, "I can sign my name." Serious again. "But my sons shall be instructed. First here at Canutillo, where they will learn in the school from books and in the life of the ranch from natural things. That is important for a man, most important of all. To-morrow you shall see at the 'blanco' how my son Augustin can shoot. Later I shall send them away to learn more in the United States."

THEN we saw the bodegas full of wheat.

"How many hectoliters did we guess?" Don Eduardo must see if he could calculate. Ten thousand? Close! Good! And see! Run it through the fingers; was it not clear?"

We saw the mowers, and the thrashers, and the plows, and the barrows—all American made.

We saw the carpenter shop.

We saw the blacksmith shop.

Then we saw the new stalls, with concrete feed boxes, for the horses. We looked over the Jefe's favorite mount, and Augustin's pony, and many others.

We saw the cows. And the goats.

By then it was almost dark. We crossed a small stream on a plank and went into the orchard. A wide path led under the trees. The shadows were long. It was beautiful.

There were many men just laying off work. They stepped aside as we passed, and saluted

the Jefe. They were working among the potatoes and tomatoes and onions and garlic, planted between the trees. Villa stepped up to three of them.

"Will you, friends, have the kindness to go to the lower field and bring us some water-melons?" The men started off, eager to be of service. We sat on the ground to wait.

The talk was of different melons. Which varieties were the better. (That was something that was to impress me continually during our visit—the so-called fierce and dictatorial Villa asking our advice again and again, on all sorts of subjects.) He said he wished he could get hold of some seeds of American melons.

Then the "friends" came with two fine big ones. We took them with us to the house, the Jefe carrying one, and Don Eduardo the other.

Back again to the sala. Villa seated himself on a straight backed chair, and we grouped ourselves in a little semi-circle about him. First he called for plates and a knife. While these were being brought he called for water to wash his hands.

A young woman brought him the little stand with the bowl and pitcher. She poured out the water for him and handed him the soap. Then she poured clear water over. This done, she handed him the towel. Louis the Fourteenth, in all the grandeur of Versailles, could not have accomplished his ablutions with more primitive formality.

The little washing outfit was then put before each of us, and the same general ceremony gone through with, while Villa proceeded to cut the melon with great deftness. He proportioned the thin slices between us and called for boxes. The young woman

them day and night, until now there are scarcely any left. But still there are fleas. Of what use are fleas, friend? If there is a God why should he make such things as a flea? How could a God think of a flea? That is what I don't understand. Of what purpose is a flea? Born only to idleness, to eat and then to "pasear." Muy pascadores, fleas. Never sleep nor let sleep. Rats! mice! fleas! What a fight it has been to establish order here! Do you not think, friend, you could send me some sort of powders to serve these last?"

"Surely I'll send you some flea powder, Don Francisco. How much do you want?"

"About fifty kilos."

"But that's enough to kill all the fleas in the world!"

"Well, we've got all the fleas in the world!"

UNFORTUNATE prospect for bed.

It was time—after 9. The Villa family, like most Mexican families, retires early. The children had gone long before.

It seems I was to have the big brass bed in state. The Jefe and his señora would hear of no other arrangement, declaring they would find themselves very comfortable in the next room with the children.

The young girl brought fresh water. The señora turned down the covers. Villa put a chair at the head and set the lamp on it. "May you rest well, señorita. Until to-morrow."

I undressed and slipped into immaculately clean sheets. Over me a white embroidered counterpane. My tired, dusty head on an exquisite hand-made pillow slip.

So this was the bed of Villa. I blew out the light.

Soon the door opened softly. The señora's gentle voice—

"The general says to leave the door to us

The oppression of heart of Villistas turned farmers?

"We have no drinking here, señorita. No gambling. No disorderly houses. Not even a baile. Nothing but work—*puro trabajo*."

Now and then a workman would come up to the Jefe, take off his hat and wait respectfully until Villa would say:

"What now, friend?"

"Excuse me, mi general, but shall we put the tomatoes in the small boxes or in the large?"

"In the small. Pack them not too closely and put one box over the other, with sticks between, in piles of six."

"*Esta bien, mi general*."

Every time in the two days that any one came to Villa for an order—and they came to him about everything—he answered them immediately, without a moment's hesitation, clearly, directly, finally, as though he drew all his orders from some swift, infallible source. And I began to understand something of his power over men, for how surely and how gratefully even the strong among us respond to complete decisiveness.

WE WENT into the church—now a warehouse. It was swept clean and piled high with boxes, crates and sacks. There was a counter half way along the front. And scales. But high on the side walls still hung the saints. And the altar, big and gilt, was untouched, but uncandled, at the room's end.

We had hardly entered when an old peon appeared at the door, hat in hand. He came on the material errand of getting a kilo of rice, but the surroundings were too much for his habit-trained, devout old soul. He asked for a kilo of rice, and then, one eye on the scale and one eye on the altar, he crossed himself. Just then he saw the Jefe, and, suddenly feeling his devotion to have been misplaced, he put on his hat. Then, realizing that was a breach to his general, he took it off as quickly. Then he put it on to take his rice and, turning, faced the altar again, and anxiously took it off.

"Pobre viejito" (poor little old man), smiled Villa, taking it all in. "So good, but so ignorant." Then he was serious. "That is the trouble with all of us, señorita. We are good people, but we are so ignorant. Where is the man with the power to lift up my race?"

He sighed. Again that overwhelming sadness. I knew that he had once dreamed of being that man.

AT DINNER we had another guest, General Nicolas Fernandez. He had ridden over with his small son from his particular part of the ranch at San Isidro, on the River Florido, eighteen leagues distant. He was another of those silent, sad, sinewy men.

The talk was ranch talk. General Fernandez was having difficulty over some water right. It was a question of politics, very difficult.

"Who is your deputy from over there?" asked the Jefe.

"I don't know."

"Those are things you should know, my friend. We must occupy ourselves with these questions now."

The talk was of crops and cattle. Villa said he wanted to go to Juarez to buy "*Gimado*." He asked advice of General Fernandez, of Don Eduardo and, yes, of me. Again that incredible eagerness to be instructed, to be told, to be advised! And that strained, drinking-in expression with which he listens, like an anxious child standing beside the teacher.

General Fernandez thought the Jefe would do better to go to Matamoros than to Juarez. But Don Eduardo didn't like Texas longhorns anywhere. And I preferred Herefords. Why did I prefer Herefords? Why were they better for him than Holsteins? And what about Jerseys? And what crosses were considered best in the United States?

The talk drifted to great ranchers. Did I know the American of the Cadena y Pelayo ranch, Don Jacobo? (Jacob Sweet.) That one was a "*puro hombre*." "*Hace divindades a caballo*!" (A real man. He does divine things on horseback.) There was a Gringo to be admired!

And General Scott! Of all the Americans he had ever known he liked best (here he turned with a courteous gesture to Don Eduardo—"putting aside for the moment your friendship, amigo")—he had liked best General Scott—"un verdadero soldado" (a true soldier).

AT THE time of siesta the señora and I sat together in the cool of the bedroom-sala. She was sewing on a bit of thin pink silk.

"What are you making, señora?"

She looked at me uneasily—"un *toallita*."

"But of such fine material, a dolly?"

She blushed and murmured something about it being for a friend. We talked of other things. The servant problem. Very difficult to get good help on a ranch. She had two women in the kitchen and two men to do nothing but grind for them (everything—corn for tortillas, wheat for bread is ground by hand on a metate), and one man to wait on the table. But neither the food nor the service of it was as she wanted. And two girls to take care of the rooms. But she must constantly see to everything herself. They were not to be trusted alone to keep everything perfectly clean.

We spoke of the Jefe.

"He seems very sad," I said. "Too sad."

"How can it be otherwise, señorita, when one has suffered so? Sometimes he tells me a little of what he has endured, and it is more than I can bear—just the telling. I would like you to know some of them, but he would not wish it. There are things a real man does not speak of. But perhaps if you would ask him, señorita, for example, about his days hiding in the cave when your army was hunting him—perhaps—I don't know—he might say a little."

We were silent for a while. I could feel her looking at me. Then she got up and, opening the wardrobe with one of the usual many keys of the Mexican lady of the house, she shyly brought out a bundle of tiny clothes, and, without a word, put it on my lap.

with fine handwork. I never knew before there was such an infinite variety of stitches.

"Each little one different," she whispered, and blushed like a girl.

AUGUSTIN came in shirring with excitement.

"We are going to have the target contest! Here is the rifle! But where are the cartridges?"

Much rumaging through the whole house of Villa to find any cartridges. Finally we are off. Augustin and I, the contestants; Villa, the señora, Don Eduardo, Margarita and quite a gallery of Villistas.

The "blanco" (target) was a white bottle placed on a stump at twenty-five metres. I lifted the rifle. But Augustin:

"A moment, señorita. Do you not want to rest the rifle by a tree?"

"But no." The little had looked very unhappy; then after a moment.

"But, señorita, it is necessary that I rest it by a tree, because I cannot hold it otherwise. It weighs too much."

"All right. You rest it, Augustin, because you are little, but I shall shoot like this because I am big." But he was not to be comforted.

"Please, señorita, do me the favor to rest it on the tree—you, too—so that we shall be equal in the contest."

Is it a disgrace, I wonder, for a grown woman to be outshot by a child of nine, when that child happens to be the first-born son of Francisco Villa?

Then the Jefe challenged Don Eduardo to a pistol contest. A bottle, still at twenty-five metres. Don Eduardo shot first. Villa's pistol. Even the Jefe was impressed. He turned to me, his eyes shining with pleasure at his friend's prowess.

"Ceraí! Señorita *Que buenos tiros estos!*" (Gee, what good shots!)

Then the Jefe. Good shooting. But no better than Don Eduardo's—perhaps not quite as good.

"*Estoy viejo*" (I am old) he murmured when we were going back through the dusk. (He is forty-four.) Again the sadness.

WILL you not tell me of some of the hard tasks you have accomplished in your ten years of revolution, mi General?"

"Ah, señorita, a man does not talk of those things."

"Well, will you not tell me why you fought for ten years?"

"That is simple, señorita. I first went into revolution because life was insupportable for the low people during the time of Diaz—and I was of the low people. I followed the little Madero. Then he was killed by Huerta. And I overcame Huerta. Then was Carranza. But nothing was better for the low people. Nothing had yet been won. So I kept on fighting until—well—now Carranza is dead and—"

"How do you feel about the death of Carranza?"

His face darkened—"Una mancha barbara! a horrible stain that will defile the history of my poor country forever." Again that pondering. Then—

"Well, he is dead. And the patria needs peace. More than anything else the patria needs peace. So I have quit fighting. I am a farmer. When I thought it was best for my people I would not quit fighting. And when I thought it was best for my people I would not go on fighting."

"How many battles have you been in, mi General?"

"Of battles, señorita—and by that I shall mean combats where at least one hundred men were left on the field—over one thousand and three hundred. I have had luck, eh?"

"Never wounded?"

"Oh, yes, of course. I have a bullet here. And here. And here. And here. And in this leg—not so lucky—three. And the last time, three different places. When we reach the house I shall show you why I shall never walk well again and why I have pain without ending."

"That was when the Americans came in?"

"Yes."

"Will you tell me about that—about your lying in a cave so long? I have heard about it, but"—

"There is not much to tell, señorita. After the battle of Herrero, where I was wounded—my leg, as I told you, broken in three places—I disband what was left of my forces, that they might escape without the burden of me. And with two men only—both my first cousins—I ran for the higher hills to a secret cave. I knew. We reached it just in the nick of time to hide, but without a moment to get food. We had with us only three kilos of rice and one and one-half kilos of sugar. And we lay there thirty-three days, señorita. Thirty-three days with nothing to eat but three kilos of rice and one and one-half kilos of sugar among three men! Luckily, there was water in the cave, and water is the most essential. There were in pursuit of us 15,000 Carranzistas and 12,000 Americans. On several different days during the first week we heard them beating the brush all around us, but so cleverly had nature arranged our hiding place never—unless they knew—could they suspect a cave. During the second week I felt that I was to die. And I made my cousins swear to build a great fire of hard wood and burn me until not a piece of bone remained. My great, my only fear, was that my dead body might be taken captive to a foreign country." A long pause. Then—

AFTER a month of that I thought it safe to try to go. And I directed my cousins to build me a stretcher of branches. On the thirty-third day they carried me out into the air of night. Traveling that way, carrying me by night, and hiding me by day, they brought me to the house of a friend. Here I lay some days while they hid food and all necessities in another larger cave, where we then retired, but not in agony this time, for six weeks more—until I was cured. But cured is hardly the word, as the wound still pained—almost continually."

We had reached the house.

"If you would look at my leg, friend, and you, señorita, and tell me if you think it will ever quit its aching."

Again that childlike confidence in our poor knowledge. Like a little boy, he pulled up his corduroy trousers leg, and the white cotton

(Continued on page four)



The author and a leading Villista at the entrance to the patio

brought two and set them before us. They were for the birds. We ate with relish.

Hardly was this over when it was supper time. The Jefe, it seems, never takes supper, but he went with us to the table.

A figure appeared outside in the dark.

"Excuse me, mi general, but Antonio is angry against Ignacio Martinez and has gone to his house for his pistol."

"Take it away from him immediately—you and Felipe—and lock him up with the gallos for to-night."

"*Esta bien, mi general*."

The incident passed without comment.

LATER, out in the patio, in the fresco. What profound stillness! What an overwhelming sense of isolation! How many, many stars!

"Tell me, friend," said the Jefe suddenly to Don Eduardo, "do you believe there is a God?"

"Yes, I do. Don't you, Don Francisco?"

"I don't know. I wonder. Sometimes I wonder very much. And then I look at the stars, so many and so mysterious. And I tell myself all these questions are too big for the little minds of men to answer." He stopped and pondered. (That is another characteristic—a habit of pondering heavily. When it is light and you can see his face you can actually see in the strain of his expression the great effort he is making to think—to think out whatever is baffling him.) After one of these queer silent inward efforts, he went on—

"But if there is a God—I say if, my friend, if!—and if he made the earth, surely he is too good to have made anything as mean as a hell! Don't you believe that, my friend? There is no hell?"

Don Eduardo agreed.

More silence. More pondering. Then—

"But of what good are churches to God, friend, or to men? We have turned our church into a warehouse and we are all better off. Why, even the saints on the wall have gotten fatter. Surely they have. To-morrow you look and you'll see. Especially those on the same side with the potatoes. I tell you between the rats and the saints it is hard for a man to make a living here."

"Are there many rats here, Don Francisco?"

"Whole armies of them. We have fought

open, that you may not feel alone or afraid during the night."

MORNING. Seven o'clock. (No—not one all night.)

The señora was waiting to take breakfast. The Jefe had long since been up. It was his custom to rise at 4. There was much to be looked after.

Soon Villa and Don Eduardo joined us. They came from a "tribunal." Afterward Don Eduardo told me about it.

"You remember that little disturbance last night, when Don Francisco ordered somebody's pistol taken away from him and the man locked up? Well, the trial was this morning. In the office. Very simple. The Jefe sat at the desk and the man was brought in. The Jefe asked him what he had to say. The man said 'nada.' Then the Jefe said: 'It is necessary that there be order here. Nothing but order. The integrity of all of us is involved. If you feel in your heart that you are henceforth able to comply, return to your work as usual. But if you feel in your heart that you are not able to comply, tell me now, and I shall arrange to have you and your family transported this very day to wherever you wish to go. What do you say?' 'I shall be orderly henceforth, mi general.' 'That is well. Go to your house.'

WE SPENT the morning going around the hacienda. How endless it was! Not a ranch. Not a little town. But a separate state.

And over it all—never lifting for a second—that unearthly sense of silent isolation. Much activity—men on horseback, mule teams, wagonloads of wheat, scrapers. But all the work going very still. No jangling of harness. No clang of tools. No talk of men. Silence. Shadows moving in a dream.

How to explain this strange, unreal stillness that hangs over the hacienda of Canutillo? Is it but the natural hush of vast, empty, low hills stretching out endlessly in clear, high air? Or is there, too, some curious repression in the souls of these people now living there?